Chapter 61
THE HUNT IS TAKING PLACE ON A PLATEAU 30 MINUTES AWAY BY CARRIAGE FROM OUR LODGINGS ...
...AND THEN ANOTHER HOUR OF TREKKING UP A MOUNTAIN.
THE GIST IS THAT WE'LL COOK WHATEVER PREY THE ELITES MANAGE TO HUNT DOWN.
NOW THAT WE'VE LEFT THE PALACE, IT FEELS AS IF NONE OF THESE PEOPLE KNOW THAT JINSHI IS A EUNUCH.
THEY ALL CALL HIM KOSEN...
...AND HE'LL BE PARTICIPATING WHILE WEARING A MASK.
I GUESS THEY WOULDN'T WANT SUCH A WILDLY BEAUTIFUL MAN...
... MILLING ABOUT DURING THEIR MANLY HUNT.

...ALL DAY YESTERDAY TOO SO NO ONE COULD SEE HIM.
THEY PROBABLY KEPT THE WINDOWS SHUT...
...NO, NEVER MIND.
I HAVE TO WONDER THOUGH ...
WHAT IS IT THAT EUNUCH HAS BEEN HIDING LATELY?
IGNO-RANCE IS BLISS.

Chapter 61 The Hunt ①

IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE PREPARING DINNER.
I WONDER IF I SHOULDN'T PITCH IN THOUGH.
THE OTHER ATTEN-DANTS AREN'T DOING ANYTHING EITHER.
I GUESS THEY'RE LEAVING IT ALL TO THE SERVANTS.
NO POINT IN STICKING MY NOSE WHERE IT DOESN'T BELONG.
GUESS I'LL GO FOR A WALK.

BUT I'M PROBABLY NOT ALLOWED TO GO IN.
SO MANY KINDS OF TREES. I BET ALL KINDS OF HERBS AND MUSHROOMS GROW HERE.
THIS IS SUCH A NICE FOREST.
I CAN HEAR RUSHING WATER IN THE DISTANCE.
SOME KIND OF BIG WATERFALL MAYBE?
OOOH, WHAT A GOOD BOY YOU ARE!
HM? THAT'S...

SQUAT
WHAT'S LI HAKU DOING HERE?
HELLO.
HI?
...HUH?

I GUESS HE DIDN'T RECOGNIZE ME SINCE I'M WEARING MAKEUP AND DIFFERENT CLOTHES.
WHATCHA DRESSED UP ALL FANCY-LIKE FOR?
OOOH, WAIT! I KNOW THAT VOICE! IT'S YOU, LI'L LADY!
BUT PERHAPS I'LL GET IN TROUBLE FOR TALKING TO SOMEONE I KNOW?
I WASN'T EVEN THINKING WHEN I CAME OVER TO TALK TO HIM.
GASP
OH YEAH?
SOME-BODY ASKED ME TO COME ALONG.
THE THING I LIKE ABOUT HIM IS HE DOESN'T TRY TO PRY TOO MUCH.
...BUT THEY TOLD ME TO LOOK AFTER THE DOG INSTEAD.
SOME-BODY ELECTED ME TO BE A GUARD...
ME TOO, AS IT SO HAPPENS.

HE'S BEEN GETTING PROMOTED A LOT LATELY.
BUT THAT GARNERS STILL MORE RESENT-MENT FROM EVERYONE ELSE.
IT'S NICE THAT HE WAS SELECTED ...
...BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE HE GOT DRIVEN OUT BY THE OTHER HOITY-TOITY GUARDS.
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
SUCH A BUNCH OF MEANIES!
SIR LI HAKU.
YOU'RE NOT VERY GOOD AT WHISTLING, ARE YOU?
PHWOOO!
PHWOOWOO!
?
BOMP
NOPE. NOW YOU BE QUIET.

FWEEEEET
!!
FWEET
FWEET
FWEET
FWEEEET
FWEET
FWEEET
HE'S SMART.
RIGHT?
SOMETIMES HE'LL EVEN COME WHEN CALLED FROM FAR AWAY.
WOW.

THOUGH IT'D BE BETTER TO HAVE A SMART ONE OF THOSE UP THERE.
WITH ALL THESE OBSTACLES, THE MOUN-TAINS, FOR ONE...
...IT SEEMS A HAWK WOULD BE BETTER THAN A HOUND.
HOWEVER, I PREFER BOAR MEAT TO RABBIT.
I DOUBT A HAWK COULD CATCH ONE OF THOSE.
I SUPPOSE HAWKS LOOK MORE IMPRESSIVE TOO.

THIS PLACE IS SUPPOSED TO BE A SUMMER RETREAT ...
...BUT IT'S SWEL-TERING YET AGAIN.
IT'S GONNA BE HARD TO HAVE A NICE TIME.

INSTEAD, BA SEN IS THE ONE ATTENDING TO JINSHI'S EVERY NEED.
WHICH REMINDS ME... I JUST WOUND UP FOLLOWING GAO SHUN AROUND...
...BUT GAO SHUN HASN'T BEEN WITH JINSHI AT ALL ...
... EXCEPT WHEN WE'RE IN OUR CHAM-BERS AT THE INN.
IT MUST BE HARD ATTENDING TO HIM IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.
HE HASN'T TAKEN A SINGLE BITE OF FOOD EITHER.

I'VE HEARD HIS NAME A LOT, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE AT ALL.
JUDGING FROM THEIR TABLE...
...THE MAN TALKING TO JINSHI NOW MUST BE SHISHO.
... MEANS HE'S THE MOST IMPORTANT GUEST HERE.
AND DESPITE THE WEIRD MASK, THE FACT THAT HE'S SITTING AT THE HEAD OF THE BANQUET...
I WONDER WHAT HE SAID JUST NOW.

...WOULD OPENLY ACT LIKE THIS.
THERE'S NO WAY THAT EVER-CHARMING EUNUCH...
NO, WAIT.
SOME-THING...
...IS OFF.
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SHAKE
SHAKE
HE'S TELLING ME TO STAY OUT OF IT.

I'M GOING TO GO RELIEVE MYSELF.
CLATTER

SWITCH WITH SOMEONE ELSE NOW.
SWAY

SIR JI—
OH, RIGHT. HE'S USING A FAKE NAME.
LORD KOSEN.
...YOU FOL-LOWED ME?
TUG
GET THIS OFF RIGHT NOW!
THERE'S NO ONE AROUND!
NO.
SOMEONE MIGHT COME.

SNAP
UGH, HE CAN BE SUCH A PAIN IN THE BUTT!
...THEN WE JUST NEED A PLACE WHERE NO ONE WILL FIND US.
IF YOU'RE SO CONCERNED ABOUT THE GAZES OF OTHERS...
KRNCH
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THIS MUST BE THE SOURCE OF THE RUSHING WATER I HEARD BEFORE.
RUSSSH
WHAT A BREATH-TAKING SIGHT.
I'VE BROUGHT WATER FROM THE KITCHENS...
...SO YOU CAN DRINK THAT AFTER.
LET'S GET YOU COOLED OFF.

?!
WHAT WAS THAT?
THWAK
AND, THIS SMELL, IT'S...
YANK

THWAK
THIS SEEMS TO BE A WHOLLY UNFORESEEN SITUATION, BUT HE'S SURPRISINGLY CALM ABOUT IT.
A FIRE-ARM ...?
GRAB
SORRY IF THIS GIVES YOU A START!

LEAP
はっ
THWAK
HUH
??

KABLOOSH
...IS GIVING ME MORE THAN A START!
THIS ...